

Message Text

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PAGE 01 VIENTI 05183 251711Z

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EXDIS

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TAGS: PGOV, PINT, MOPS, PFOR, LA

SUBJECT: LAO POLITICAL NEGOTIATIONS: COMPROMISE
SOLUTION IN SIGHT

SUMMARY: RLG SENIOR NEGOTIATOR PHENG PHONGSAVAN
CONFIRMED JULY 24 THAT LPF HAS OFFERED SOME MAJOR
CONCESSIONS AND THAT AS A RESULT HE EXPECTS LAO NEGOTIA-
TIONS TO BE COMPLETED WITHIN TEN DAYS. END SUMMARY

1. PHENG TOLD ME, EVENING JULY 24, THAT PHOUMI HAD
OFFERED SOME SIGNIFICANT CONCESSIONS WHICH SHOULD
FACILITATE COMPLETING WITHIN TEN DAYS NEGOTIATION
OF PROTOCOL IMPLEMENTING FEBRUARY VIENTIANE AGREEMENT.
SPECIFICALLY, PHOUMI IS NO LONGER INSISTING ON LPF
OBTAINING DEPUTY PRIME MINISTERSHIP. PHOUMI ALSO AGREED
TO RLG HEADING MINISTRIES OF DEFENSE AND INTERIOR BUT
IN RETURN IS NOW ASKING FOR MINISTRIES OF EDUCATION
AND RELIGION. RLG CONSIDERS THAT LPF POSITIONS ON VICE
PRIME MINISTERSHIP AND INTERIOR PROTFOLIO ARE SIGNIFICANT
CONCESSIONS.
2. ON NEUTRALIZATION OF VIENTIANE AND LUANG PRABANG,
THE TWO SIDES HAVE NOT YET RECONCILED THEIR DIFFERENCES
BUT PHENG THOUGHT THAT COMPROMISE COULD BE STRUCK BETWEEN
THE TWO POSITIONS.

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 02 VIENTI 05183 251711Z

3. THE TWO SIDES HAVE ALSO AGREED ON ESTABLISHMENT OF

JOINT LAO MOBILE MILITARY TEAMS (INSTEAD OF FIXED TEAMS) BUT THEY DIFFER ON HOW TO RESOLVE DISAGREEMENT WITHIN THIS BODY. SINCE DECISIONS BY THE JOINT LAO MILITARY COMMISSION MUST BE UNANIMOUS, LPF WANT DIFFERENCES RESOLVED BY SOUVANNA AND SOUPHANOUVONG WHILE RLG WANTS SOUVANNA ALONE, IN HIS CAPACITY OF PRIME MINISTER, TO DECIDE. THE JOINT LAO MILITARY COMMISSION WILL ALSO DRAW UP A MAP OF WHO HOLDS WHAT TERRAIN AFTER NEW GOVERNMENT OF COALITION HAS BEEN FORMED. COMMISSION WILL SEND TEAMS TO MAKE ON THE SPOT INSPECTIONS TO DETERMINE PRESENCE OF RLG AND LPF FORCES.

4. AS ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF LPF'S WILLINGNESS TO MAKE CONCESSIONS, PHENG CITED PHOUMI'S APPROVAL TO INCLUDE IN THE PROTOCOL SPECIFIC MENTION OF FREEDOM FOR CABINET MEMBERS TO GO ANYWHERE IN THE KINGDOM. PHENG SAID RLG MINISTERS WOULD AVAIL THEMSELVES OF THIS CLAUSE SHORTLY AFTER FORMATION OF NEW GOVERNMENT TO VISIT KEY SITES IN LPF-HELD ZONE.

5. PHENG SAID HE IS SEEING PHOUMI AFTERNOON JULY 25 IN EFFORT TO TRY NARROW DOWN FURTHER CONFLICTING VIEWS ON THOSE ISSUES WHERE THERE IS NOT YET AGREEMENT. HE WILL THEN DISCUSS STATUS OF NEGOTIATIONS WITH VIENTIANE POLITICIANS AND FAR CINC BEFORE REPORTING TO PRIME MINISTER. IF UNRESOLVED ISSUES REMAIN, IT WILL THEN BE UP TO SOUVANNA TO DECIDE WITH PHOUMI WHAT TO DO. IN SHORT, PHENG IS TRYING TO AVOID BEING BLAMED FOR MAKING FURTHER CONCESSIONS AND WILL "PASS THE BUCK" TO THE PRIME MINISTER.

6. PHENG SAID THAT ON BASIS PRESENT MOOD AND FACT THAT MOST ISSUES HAVE BEEN NARROWED DOWN TO WHERE AGREEMENT IS IN SIGHT, HE EXPECTS THE PROTOCOL TO BE SIGNED WITHIN NEXT TEN DAYS.

7. I STRESSED WITH PHENG THE SAME POINTS I HAD MADE OVER THE LAST FEW WEEKS, I.E. IMPORTANCE OF (A) SPELLING OUT IN PROTOCOL DETAILED PROVISIONS ON MIAS, (B) AVOIDING REFERENCES TO THE UNITED STATES AND THAILAND AND (C)

SECRET

SECRET

PAGE 03 VIENTI 05183 251711Z

MAKING CLEAR THAT INTRODUCTION OF MILITARY MATERIAL WILL BE GOVERNED BY THE PROVISIONS OF THE 1962 AGREEMENT. PHENG SAID THAT HE HOPED ALL THREE POINTS WILL BE COVERED SATISFACTORILY IN THE FINAL AGREEMENT.

8. IF AGREEMENT IS COMPLETED DURING NEXT TEN DAYS, PHENG SAID THAT LPF WILL BRING MINISTERS TO VIENTIANE AS SOON AS LPF MILITARY CAN BE BROUGHT IN SUFFICIENT

NUMBERS TO PROVIDE SECURITY. LPF HAS ALREADY ASKED FOR SPACE TO GARRISON THE SOLDIERS AND TO HOUSE THEIR MINISTERS AND BOTH SIDES ARE EXPLORING HOW TO MOVE LPF CIVILIANS AND MILITARY TO VIENTIANE WITHIN THE SHORTEST PERIOD OF TIME. IN SHORT BOTH SIDES ARE PROCEEDING ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT PRESENT NEGOTIATIONS WILL BE BROUGHT TO FRUITION IN NEAR FUTURE.
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